

Annual Corporate Evaluation Report 2008

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Evaluation Unit
International Development Research Centre

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Introduction

IDRC's performance management system includes strategic planning, integrated risk management, internal audit, and evaluation. The 2008 Special Examination of IDRC by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada complimented IDRC with its conclusion, "Overall we found that IDRC has a good structure and processes in place to measure its performance. The Centre has developed an elaborate set of mechanisms over the years to gather and assess the results of activities. We also noted that IDRC is continually seeking ways to improve the measurement of its programs' outcomes and impacts." At the request of Governors, this introduction will describe the Centre's evaluation approach and system before delving into the content of this year's ACE report.

Evaluation at IDRC

In order to be effective, IDRC strives to be an accountable learning-organization by integrating a culture of "evaluative thinking" into its activities. Evaluative thinking involves being results-oriented, reflective, questioning, and using evidence to test assumptions. Evaluation plays an important role in building and sustaining this culture. In essence, evaluation begins at the planning stage when the intended results are articulated and Governors approve the Corporate Strategy and Program Framework (CSPF) and the programs' objectives in the prospecti.

The framework for evaluation is utility: evaluation should have a clear use and should respond to the needs of the user, whether management, a program or a partner. IDRC's approach to evaluation prioritizes equally the use of rigorous methods and the utility of the evaluation process and findings. As a result, IDRC and its Evaluation Unit do not advocate or employ any particular evaluation content, model, method, theory, or even use¹. In this way, IDRC's approach to evaluation mirrors the Centre's approach to research for development.

This focus on utility also means that evaluation operates at multiple levels (see figure 1). In some cases, projects are the focus of evaluation; in other situations, programs, organizations, or key issues are the point of interest. The Evaluation Unit assesses the quality of all evaluations, and maintains an inventory of these evaluations so they can be accessed by others. The various levels of evaluation inform each other but, given the different foci and users, evaluation findings are not "rolled up" from the project to the strategic level. Rather, to maintain the integrity of the unit of the analysis, the Centre uses each type of evaluation for both accountability and learning.

¹ IDRC has developed and promoted specific methodologies for evaluating research for development, such as Outcome Mapping and Organizational Assessment, but these are not the only methods that are promoted and used.

Evaluation findings from the various levels are presented annually to Governors in this Annual Corporate Evaluation (ACE) report. The report does not present all evaluation work conducted Centre-wide, but synthesizes information on one or several key topics. Governors also receive in-depth external reviews of all programs towards the end of each prospectus cycle. In this way, Governors can be assured of the results being achieved by the Centre.

At the **project level**, two main evaluative tools are in place. **Project evaluations** are conducted, normally under the direction of Program Officers or projects themselves. Not all projects are evaluated; rather the choice of what to evaluate is made based on need (i.e., based on the risk, priority, phase, size, etc. of the project). The second element of the evaluation system at the project level is the **rolling Project Completion Report (rPCR)**. rPCRs are the records of Program Officers' assessment of projects and capture results achieved and significant learning. They complement the technical reports by project grantees. All projects over \$150,000 are required to have an end-of-project rPCR. A sample of projects are also assessed at the end of the design stage and at the mid-point of project implementation.

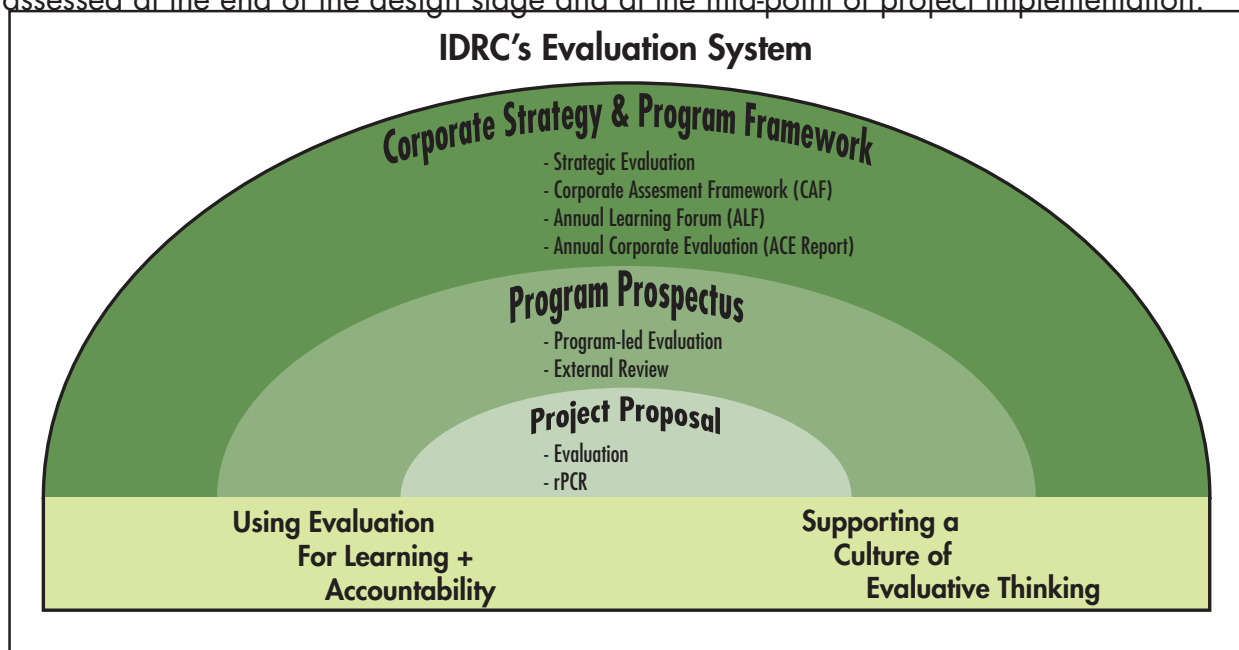


Figure 1.

These rPCRs form the basis of an **Annual Learning Forum (ALF)**, an opportunity for staff to reflect together on important issues related to programming.

At the **program level**, two main evaluation tools exist. First, **program-led evaluations** can occur at the project, program, organizational, thematic, or regional level and can be conducted either internally or externally. The program defines and implements these evaluations based on their needs. The primary intended users of these evaluations are usually the program team itself or its close partners (e.g., collaborating donors, project

partners, like-minded organizations). Second, **external reviews** at IDRC are summative evaluations conducted towards the end of each program's cycle. They are the Centre's primary accountability mechanism at the program level for the results, effectiveness, and relevance of program spending. These reviews are managed by the Evaluation Unit and are conducted by program area in order to facilitate their use in decision-making by Senior Management (SMC) and the Board of Governors. They also serve as input into prospectus development by the programs. These program-level evaluations are complemented by the reports prepared annually by either the Director of Program Areas or Regional Directors (DPA/RD).

At the **corporate level** there are four primary evaluation tools. The **ACE** report and **ALF** have already been described. **Strategic evaluations** are undertaken to broaden the Centre's understanding of issues of importance to staff, management and project partners. They tend to focus on the primary intended results of the Centre as articulated in the corporate strategy. The issues cut across particular program areas and regions and tend to involve multiple components over multiple years. This year's ACE report includes highlights of 5 organizational case-studies from the capacity development strategic evaluation. The **Corporate Assessment Framework** (CAF) was introduced in 2006 as a tool to report on corporate level performance. Using content analysis, triangulated with key informant interviews, the CAF captures and analyzes discussion, analysis, and decision making around seven core performance areas. These performance areas cut across the Centre's programming and were selected by SMC for their critical role in creating enabling conditions for effective programming. The performance areas are: enhancing capacities, policy and technology influence, Canadian partnerships, gender equality and women's rights, evaluative thinking, donor partnerships, and strategic knowledge gathering.

The findings produced by the various levels of evaluation are used in a variety of Centre reports (e.g., Annual Report, DPA/RD reports, Strategic Review, etc.). For transparency and to share learnings, most IDRC evaluations are also available on the public website. Various reporting formats are used to gear the findings to particular audiences (e.g., short policy briefs, videos, etc.).

As noted in the Special Examination, building a strong culture of evaluative thinking at IDRC requires that evaluation go beyond the conduct and promulgation of evaluation studies. The Evaluation Unit, Programs and Partnership Branch, and Southern researchers are all actively involved in these efforts. First, supporting the use of evaluation means that the Centre is actively involved in the development of fora for reflecting on findings such as the Annual Learning Forum. Second, the Centre and project partners develop evaluation tools and methods relevant to development research, especially as the field moves beyond project evaluation to address more strategic issues. Third, building evaluation capacity is a key component of supporting a critical, reflective, and learning culture – not only within the Centre but also by research partners. Strengthening the field of evaluation in the South is critical if evaluation is to take hold effectively in our partner organizations. In these ways, evaluation becomes a dimension of organizational development, knowledge systems, and evidence-based decision-making.

ACE 2008

A major focus of the ACE report this year is capacity building. As capacity building is one of the strategic objectives of the current Corporate Strategy and Program Framework (CSPF 2005-2010), a strategic evaluation is being conducted to examine the Centre's progress and to help inform discussions around the development of the next CSPF.

This year's ACE report includes short summaries of the findings of five organizational case studies. They highlight the variety of organizations with which the Centre is active and note differences in supporting capacity development with each type. These cases will be the basis for a cross-case analysis in the final phase of the evaluation.

In addition, ACE documents the evaluations conducted this year and reports on overall evaluation quality, which remains high. We do see a larger proportion of evaluators coming from the North rather than from partner countries this year, reflecting the ongoing challenges in building evaluation capacity in the South. Each year, the final section of ACE presents external perspectives on IDRC's evaluation system. Our evaluation system has evolved over the past 15 years to include new assessment mechanisms (e.g., CAF), revise outdated processes (e.g., rPCR), and incorporate innovative methods (e.g. outcome mapping) but the foundation has remained constant. The combination of rigorous methods, a use-orientation, and field-building have led to the Centre's reputation as a leader in evaluation as evidenced by our inclusion in the 4th edition of Dr. Michael Patton's book *Utilization-Focussed Evaluation* (see section 4).

Fred Carden
Director, Evaluation

Section 2: Overview of Evaluation in 2007-2008

Section 2.1: Quality of Evaluation Reports

This section reports on the quality of the 14 evaluations received by the Unit. The Evaluation Unit assesses the quality of evaluation reports against criteria based on the program standards endorsed by international evaluation associations: utility, feasibility, accuracy, and propriety.

The Unit collected fewer evaluations this year compared to 2006 and 2007, with 23 and 19 evaluations respectively. This is likely a timing issue. All but one program and a number of the regional offices are currently conducting evaluations. Annex 2 illustrates the 21 new evaluations, as well as the 12 on-going evaluations that are currently being conducted by programs. Moreover, there are a number of on-going corporate evaluations such as the large conference and capacity development strategic evaluations, as well as the external program reviews.

Table 1: Quality Of Evaluation Reports			
Aspect of Quality	2007-2008 n=14	2006-2007 n=19	2005-2006 n=23
OVERALL	All acceptable	N/A	N/A
	97 %	69 %	70 %
Utility	92 %	70 %	78 %
Feasibility	96 %	80 %	78 %
Accuracy	98 %	88 %	89 %
Propriety	100 % ²	39 %	35 %

Having done quality assessments since 2002, this year the Evaluation Unit investigated how eight other organizations measure evaluation quality and made some adjustments to the approach. Most notably, an overall assessment of each evaluation was added and two propriety questions that focus on the development of evaluation capacity were moved. Data on evaluation capacity is now located in the section where the Unit captures and shares lessons from the evaluations. Changes were made in order to more accurately report on quality to Governors as well as increase the utility of the data for improving the Centre's capacity in evaluation.

As Table 1 indicates, the Centre's evaluation reports this year were of high quality across all 4 dimensions. On average, they scored positively in 97% of all indicators and all 14 reports were deemed of acceptable quality.

² Figure reflects adjustments made to the approach of assessing propriety.

Utility is assessed by the degree to which the evaluations explicitly identify the users and uses of the evaluations and describe how the users participate in the evaluation process. The *Building Learning Systems for Honduran Development-IDRC External Review* report written by William Edwardson and Brenda Bucheli provided a good example of clearly defined utility in an evaluation.

" The primary users of the external evaluation are IDRC managers. Managers in Ottawa and LACRO (Montevideo) were consulted regarding their expectations and intended use of the Evaluation, and other IDRC staff in Ottawa and Honduras provided input to the design of the Evaluation Plan. CIDA staff in the Americas Branches was approached to provide input also with respect to their perspectives and questions. However, as IDRC funded this Evaluation study, IDRC managers were identified as the primary users, although efforts were made to make the evaluation as useful as possible to CIDA (p. 7)."

Evaluation reports are deemed **accurate** when they present conclusions and recommendations that are supported by evidence that has been derived through the application of appropriate and solid methods. For example, the *In Focus Evaluation* conducted by Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez triangulated qualitative data collection techniques (individual interviews and focus group discussions) with an on-line survey and a review of how similar organizations track the impact of the dissemination efforts of comparable products (p. 10).

A positive assessment of **feasibility** means that the methods and approaches are well matched to the questions and issues the evaluation set out to examine. Issues around resources, timing, perspectives represented, and information sources consulted can affect feasibility.

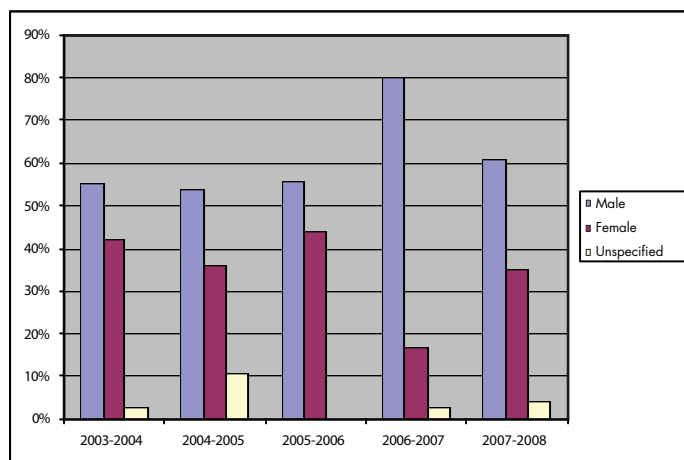
As noted earlier, until this year **propriety** was assessed in relation to both ethical issues as well as explicit goals to increase the capacity of the evaluation users. Now, the propriety standard only assesses ethical issues and this year there were no ethical concerns in the evaluation reports.

Section 2.2: Profile of Evaluators

IDRC's decentralized evaluation system means that evaluators are not only contracted by the Evaluation Unit but also by Management, Programs, Regional Offices, and Project Partners. The Evaluation Unit tracks the profile of the evaluators by sex, geographic location, and type of organization.

In total, 23 evaluators conducted the 14 evaluation reports received by the Evaluation Unit. This year IDRC hired 61% male, 35% female evaluators, and 4% unspecified. Table 2 indicates a more even gender distribution than last year when 80% of IDRC-hired evaluators were male. This year's ratio is more consistent with the trend over the past five years.

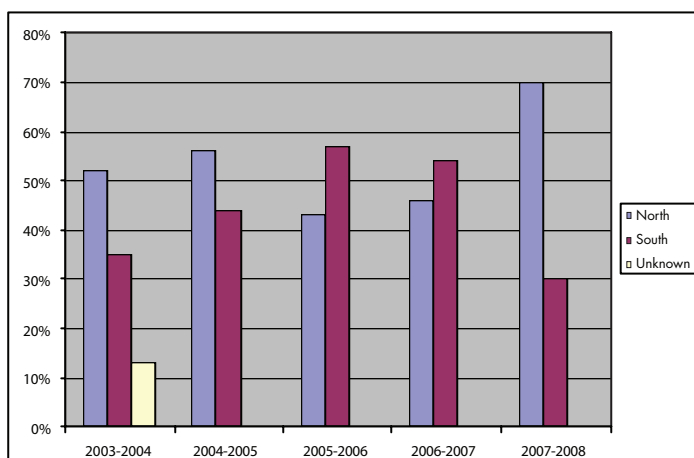
Table 2: Sex of Evaluators



One mechanism for supporting the growing evaluation profession in the South is recruiting Southern evaluators to conduct evaluations of IDRC projects and programs.

Unlike the past four years when the Centre hired a higher percentage of Southern evaluators, this year 70% of the evaluators contracted by IDRC were from the global North and 30% from the South (see Table 3). This finding merits attention to assess whether it is a one-year variation or a new trend. While the Centre needs to hire the best evaluator for the particular purposes of the evaluation, it also must be noted there are systemic challenges to identifying and recruiting Southern evaluators. The Evaluation Unit will continue to support the Centre to overcome these challenges by forging relationships with the nascent professional evaluation associations in developing countries and expanding our network of qualified evaluators in the South working in fields related to the Centre's program areas.

Table 3: North-South Distribution of Evaluators



Section 3: Strategic Evaluation of Organizational Capacity Development

A key corporate objective of IDRC is "...to assist the developing regions to build up the research capabilities, the innovative skills and the institutions required to solve their problems" (IDRC Act, 1970). To evaluate this objective, the Centre is conducting a strategic evaluation on capacity development. The purpose of this Centre-wide evaluation is to provide IDRC's own staff and managers with an intellectual framework and a useful common language to help harness the concept and document the experiences that the Centre has accumulated in this area. Specifically, it focuses on the processes and results of IDRC support for the development of capacities of its Southern partners – what capacities have been enhanced, whose, how, and how effectively?

The strategic evaluation is composed of five phases. The first phase defined what the Centre means by 'building' or 'developing' capacities and sharpened its understanding of how and with whom IDRC supports capacity development. The second phase developed a set of typologies based on a review of 43 projects to assist IDRC staff and partners in conceptualizing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating capacity development at the individual researcher, organizational, and network level. Using this project review and other findings from phase 1, the third phase elaborated a list of 'good practices'³ that capture some of the key elements of IDRC's support that staff and partners view as being critical to building research capacities.

Working Definition of Capacity Development.

"For IDRC, Capacity Development is the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies:

- increase their ability to identify and analyse development challenges, and to conceive, conduct, manage and communicate research that addresses these challenges over time and in a sustainable manner." ⁴

The fourth and current phase—presented in the following pages—provides the Centre evidence of how IDRC develops 'complete capacity' to carry out research related activities within organizations.

The decision to focus on organizations was deliberate. Findings from the earlier phases of the capacity building study (phases 1 and 2) indicated that IDRC's main entry point for capacity development is the individual partner (researcher or group of researchers). However, IDRC understands that researchers are always connected to others within the research problématique or system. This led to the decision to focus the strategic evaluation on how capacity support to individuals or groups – IDRC's forté - contributes to capacity development at the organizational level.

³ See Annex 4 for the list of IDRC's "Good Practices" in supporting capacity development.

⁴ Adapted from "IDRC-Supported Capacity Building: Developing a Framework for Capturing Capacity Changes" by Stephanie Neilson and Charles Lusthaus, February 2007.

A case study approach was developed for this fourth phase in order to ground the findings of phases 1 to 3 in specific in-depth experiences. Six long-time IDRC partner organizations currently receiving support were selected using a purposeful sample based on maximum variation. These information-rich cases capture how, over time IDRC sustained support contributed to organizational capacity development. The cases represent different types of organizations in different geographic regions and with diverse programmatic concentration that have received significant IDRC support (more than \$2 million) over the last ten years (1996-2006). Each case includes a variety of projects and activities – some, but not all, with explicit capacity development objectives at the organizational level. Since most IDRC staff have voiced a belief that “capacity development is part of everything we do” (Neilson and Lusthaus, 2007), a better understanding of the explicit versus implicit approach to research capacity development is critical for understanding how the Centre can best plan for, implement, and evaluate capacity development support with partners.

The case studies in the strategic evaluation encompass approximately CA \$25 million in project funds over a decade and include the following organizations:

1. *The Association for Progressive Communications (APC)*: APC is an international network of civil society organizations dedicated to empowering and supporting groups and individuals working for peace, human rights, development, and protection of the environment, through the use of ICTs, including the internet. The Centre—including Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) as well as the Evaluation Unit and Special Initiatives Division has supported APC with approximately \$4 million since 1996.
2. *Makerere University*: Makerere is the oldest institution of higher education in Uganda. Despite the difficulties the university faced during Uganda’s political turmoil in the 1970s and 1980s, Makerere is still regarded as the country’s most prestigious university and as Uganda’s main centre for academic research. IDRC’s relationship with Makerere started in 1972. Since 1996, IDRC has provided approximately \$8.5 million of financial support through the Social Economic Policy (SEP), ICT4D, and Environmental Natural Resource Management (ENRM) program areas.
3. *The Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Cambodia*: Cambodia’s MoE was established in 1993 with a broad mandate of promoting environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. The Ministry has received approximately \$3 million of direct support from SEP, ENRM, and the Regional Activity Fund, with the majority of resources coming from ENRM. Since 1997, ENRM support in Cambodia has focused much of its efforts on community-based natural resource management initiatives.
4. *Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD)*: UCAD was established in 1957 and is one of the largest and most prestigious universities in West Africa. IDRC’s relationship with UCAD started in 1989⁵ and since 1996 has included \$3.4 million of support from SEP, ICT4D, and the Regional Activity Fund.

⁵ The case studies examine IDRC and its long-term partners’ relationship over the span of 10 years (1996-2006). The Centre’s relationship with certain partners, like UCAD & Makerere, goes beyond this timeframe but is not the focus of the study.

5. *The Economic and Social Research Consortium (CIES)*: CIES was established in 1998 under the name Peru Economic Research Consortium. In 2000, its mandate was widened to include social policy research and was renamed CIES (for its Spanish acronym- Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social). IDRC—including the Forward Planning Fund, SEP, the Evaluation Unit and PBDD—has financially supported CIES with \$5.7 million since 1999.

The sixth and final case study of the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) is still being prepared and will be presented in next year's ACE report. The full case study reports with 6-page executive summaries will be available on the Evaluation Unit website at: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-118757-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

The case studies demonstrate the Centre's generally strong performance in organizational capacity development with a range of long-standing partners. The evaluators identified the multiple roles that IDRC has played in supporting capacity development. These roles include: 'strategic ally and partner,' 'advisor,' 'catalyst for change,' and 'collaborator' among others. As outlined in the summaries, the combination of these multifaceted roles encourages layered capacity development and highlights why tracking and reporting on capacity development is a complex undertaking.

The fifth and final phase of the strategic evaluation will include a paper pulling together the capacity development frameworks emerging from the evaluation as a practical tool for program improvement. It will also involve a thorough cross-case analysis to identify patterns, core experiences, and shared dimensions, as well as bring together results and learning. Some issues emerging for the cross-case analysis include: the role of collegial relationships between IDRC staff and project partners; the implicit versus explicit organizational capacity development objectives; the differing understanding and interpretations of capacity development and the language Centre staff use to describe it; and finding the balance between the goals of research capacity development and research for policy influence. These findings will be disseminated internally and externally through print, electronic, and workshop media.

Positive Relationship Work:

Organizational Case of Study of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) by Terri Willard

Support and encouragement from IDRC has helped the Association for Progressive Communications face the challenges of the communications revolution.

The partnership forged between IDRC and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) in 1996 seemed a natural fit. APC began as a loose coalition of internet service providers seeking to give non-profit and civil society organizations in their countries access to the benefits of computer-based communications. IDRC—which has a long history of working in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) field—saw a clear affinity with APC, and an opportunity to help advance its goals.

But who could have anticipated the communications revolution that took both organizations on such an unanticipated journey? Throughout the 1990s, new technological innovations and rapidly falling costs created explosive growth in ICT use in industrialized nations—fuelling, in turn, an ICT for Development (ICT4D) movement that aimed to avoid the entrenchment of a global “digital divide” by encouraging new technologies to take root in the developing world. At conferences such as the 1996 Information Society and Development gathering in Johannesburg, and two World Summits on the Information Society; in publications such as the World Bank’s ‘Knowledge for Development’ report; and through worldwide networks, the need for equitable global access to ICTs became a theme with widespread resonance.

Change was unstoppable. Between 1996 and 2007, the number of global internet users grew from roughly 16 million to approximately 1.1 billion. Significant segments of this technological transformation occurred in the developing world: in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, massive increases in cellphone use (driven by \$25 billion in mostly private investment), continues to have implications for social and economic relations.

Surfing the waves of change

It is against this landscape that IDRC’s relationship with APC must be seen. “The context of the relationship has been one of continuous change,” writes Terri Willard in her evaluation report.

But rather than merely *reacting* to the historic shifts around them, both organizations have emerged as leaders in their field. APC became more than just a grassroots organization, evolving into a globally-relevant voice in the debates over international communications policy. For IDRC, ICT4D has become a major focus, with the Centre assuming a role as one of the most respected supporters of research on the subject. Their journey together has provided both partners with mutual benefits and insights as they strive for equity in the new international communications environment.

In the case of APC, the numbers tell a remarkable story. APC's income, for example, grew from \$150,000 to \$3,630,000 between 1996 and 2006.

The case study report documents how such remarkable organizational shifts and growth posed significant challenges, and demanded of both organizations a high level of organizational planning, research, and management capacities. Findings also revealed little evidence that either organization was fully aware of the profound organizational challenges and changes facing the other over the ten year period. With most interactions between the organizations focused on either projects or trends in ICT4D, important conversations regarding organizational management were at times overlooked.

In the absence of an explicit discussion on organizational issues, IDRC still supported the development of organizational capacities within APC through a number of means. One of them has been the direct support of initiatives to bolster the organization's institutional and administrative strengths and to transfer skills to APC employees, and by sponsoring regional strategy and planning workshops.

Multiple approaches to capacity building

But much of the capacity building that IDRC has encouraged within APC has come about informally—as an outgrowth of the two organizations' working relationships. IDRC has engaged APC as an *implementer* of the Centre's projects and as a *collaborator* on joint projects (e.g., through its relationship with IDRC's Bellanet Secretariat). The two have also worked together as *strategic allies* (that is, as like-minded thinkers on advocacy and planning, as exemplified in both organizations' participation in the Executive Committee of the Global Knowledge Partnership conference (GK3). IDRC and APC also have come together as *strategic partners* providing insights on the evolution of the ICT4D field through mutual participation in organizational planning meetings.

The study concludes that the multiple roles that IDRC has played in APC's development conforms to organizational analyst Mona Girgis' definition of "positive relationship work." In this type of partnership, the donor contributes to capacity building through "suggestive dialogue," and the collaboration is marked by a creative outlook, shared understandings, and mutual commitments.¹ Over the years, the relationship has provided avenues through which the two organizations have become "partners in learning"—challenging each other's perspectives, seeking to improve performance, and advancing the application of ICTs to further social justice and address development issues.

This does not imply that IDRC and APC have always been in complete accord. But when friction has arisen—for instance, over a perception of differing commitments to using open source software and a difference of opinions around the functioning of the multi-country Gender Research in Africa into ICTs for Empowerment (GRACE) network—a history of cordiality and mutual respect has ensured the relationship's resilience. The two organizations also have differing research styles. While APC sees its primary strength as advocating for change, IDRC focuses more on generating evidence (through support of formal research) to inform advocacy. Current projects are attempting to find the complementarity between both approaches.

¹ Girgis, Mona, "The Capacity-building Paradox: Using Friendship to Build Capacity in the South," *Development in Practice*, 17:3, 353 - 366 (2007).

One of the clearest examples where an IDRC-APC collaboration led to significant capacity building has been that of the Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM), a project undertaken by APC's Women's Networking Support Program. Arising from a mutual interest by IDRC and APC in evaluating the specific impact of ICTs on women, the GEM team distilled the experiences it gathered from field-testing, and used the results to construct a tool for evaluating the gender impacts of ICT initiatives.

With GEM, APC moved beyond its earlier mandate as an internet service provider, to develop new capacities in research and analysis. One former APC consultant told Willard that: "It (GEM) was a real fork in the road ... If you look at the capacity trajectory, the APC went from being an organization with strong technical capacities, to being an organization with the ability to manage complex, important and abstract projects."

APC defends and promotes the Internet as a powerful tool and space for promoting and facilitating social change. Concerns for ICT policy making began to emerge simultaneously from within the APC Africa network and from global networks. In 1999, IDRC stepped in to support APC's efforts to expand the emerging Internet Rights movement to Africa and Latin America, through the collection and interpretation of policy information. Working in the ICT policy arena stretched APC's capacities in multiple ways and taught both APC and IDRC important lessons regarding the importance of sequencing organizational human resource development to keep up with fast moving demands for policy advocacy.

Looking ahead

With regard to the future—and the lessons to be built upon—the report advises that the sort of advances that occurred spontaneously in the past might be achieved in a more formal way, with organizational capacity-building strategies guided more by conscious design and discussion between both organizations.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a Canadian crown corporation, created to help developing countries find solutions to the social, economic, and natural resource problems they face. Support is directed to building indigenous research capacity. Because strengthening and mobilizing research capacity is a cornerstone of IDRC's work, in 2005 the Evaluation Unit launched a strategic evaluation on capacity development focusing on the processes and results of IDRC support of its Southern partners. The evaluation design and studies can be found at: www.idrc.ca/en/ev-70623-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Re-building Prestige in Research:

Organizational Case Study of Makerere University

by Charles Lusthaus, Anette Wenderoth and Miranda Cobb

Restoring research capacity at Uganda's Makerere University has profound implications for the country's future. IDRC sees its role as providing specialized support for researchers.

Founded as a technical school in 1922, Uganda's Makerere University has distinguished itself as one of Africa's premiere educational institutions—especially during its “golden age” in the 1960s—but has also endured great hardships.

The turbulence that came with the rule of Idi Amin in the 1970s, which persisted through the Obote regime of the early 1980s, had a profound impact on Makerere. Teetering near bankruptcy, the university saw its infrastructure eroded, its staff migrate to other jobs or other countries, and the quality of research and teaching decline dramatically.

Since 1990, however, Makerere has been making the arduous climb back to a position of stability and leadership. Internally, the university's administration has pursued a vigorous rebuilding strategy, while the current government has signaled its view of Makerere as a key contributor to Uganda's economic and social development. One indicator of the university's return to prominence is its rise in enrollment from 7,000 students annually in the early 1990s to roughly 30,000 today.

Having supported Makerere since 1972, IDRC maintained its engagement with the University during its difficult times and has continued to lend support to enable this centre of learning to restore its esteemed reputation. The case study findings reflect that this collaboration has taken the exclusive form of support to individual researchers. While other donors have taken and continue to take an “institutional approach” that directs support towards the university per se, IDRC has focused on specific research questions that probe development problems.

Has this approach significantly contributed to building research capacity at Makerere? The case study authors explored this question in detail.

Theoretical and practical gains

On a theoretical level, support for individual scholars is entirely consistent with the goal of boosting the institution's overall stature and capacities. For while a university is defined partly by “tightly coupled”¹ relationships where support for the whole trickles down—in hierarchical fashion—to the component parts,

¹ Tight coupling “means that decisions at one vertical level of the organization regularly have direct, immediate, and significant effects on other levels.” (Lusthaus et al., 9).

it also contains many “loosely coupled”² relationships that allow diverse players to contribute to the whole in a more autonomous, less linear fashion. By focusing on “people’s abilities,” the evaluators conclude that IDRC has been able to apply its comparatively limited resources in ways that complement other donors’ efforts to strengthen the “enabling conditions” required for the overall functioning of the university.

Expressed more practically, IDRC support has helped researchers break with financial and other constraints, such as weak project planning and management skills, or the absence of crucial research infrastructure like bibliographic material, that often makes research undoable. In policy terms, Makerere has had strong intentions to increase its reputation as a research centre, and the government has flagged the institution’s specialization in areas such as appropriate technologies, economics and biotechnology as potentially contributing to Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan. Still, this “research for development” agenda has not been accompanied by increased funding from the State. So, while many academics struggle with heavier teaching loads (as Makerere looks towards increased enrollment and tuition for financial stability), the study concludes that third-party funding from organizations like IDRC assumes a crucial role. Not only does it allow academics to leave the lecture hall to pursue research; it moves Makerere closer to its goal of being a beacon of innovation by providing the technical support needed to build a corps of motivated and knowledgeable researchers.

Engaged with the substance of research

Key informant interviews with researchers supported by IDRC between 1996 and 2006 revealed that the Centre’s research capacity-building efforts have extended beyond simply “buying time” for research. Their consensus was that, since IDRC Program Officers have significant knowledge of the research themes supported by the Centre, their input into research design, execution and use became a valuable resource for the research community.

Some researchers cited the value of IDRC assistance in writing proposals and project concept papers. “Writing the proposal in itself was a process that deepened my knowledge and understanding and was an exciting experience,” noted one researcher from Makerere. Another mentioned that, “The various comments from IDRC were very constructive and helped me grow.” IDRC staff also provided information, training and advice on research methodology. This applied especially to transdisciplinary and participatory research—approaches with particular utility where complex questions are studied in community settings as is often the case in Uganda and other countries in Africa.

The Centre also assisted researchers towards the latter stages of their projects—for example, by encouraging the dissemination, sharing and publication of research findings. Similarly, program officers provided opportunities for researchers to reflect upon the results and potential applications of their work, and in some cases made arrangements for them to present papers at international conferences.

² Loose coupling is defined as “a situation in which system elements (e.g. parts of an organization) are responsive to each other, but at the same time retain evidence of separateness and identity.” (Lusthaus et al., 9 citing Weick, 1976).

Helping construct networks of researchers with similar interests is another way IDRC has sought to boost the profile and impact of the work with Makerere and reflects how a modest level of support from IDRC provides the legitimacy and credibility that fledgling researchers often need to get a new idea off the ground in the research community. One recipient noted that: “We had this idea of creating a research network on ICTs [information and communication technologies] in Uganda but initially it didn’t work out. IDRC came in and provided funding for a workshop to get the thing started... The workshop helped us kick off the network.”

While IDRC challenged researchers to question their assumptions and move beyond established approaches, researchers felt IDRC also respected its partners’ decisions. Said one: “We had different ideas than IDRC had initially expected. We discussed them and they accepted our ideas. They challenge your thinking but leave you alone and don’t force you to take their view.”

The case study authors summarized IDRC’s multiple capacity-building roles at Makerere as fitting the moulds of *enabler* (by providing funding for research and for conferences and events), *connector* (by linking researchers with their peers and encouraging exchange of views and information), and *advisor* (by providing feed-back and assistance on methodology and skills).

Looking ahead

In the future, the report suggests that there could be potential for enhancing the IDRC and Makerere relationship by bringing the capacity-building aspects of IDRC-supported research with Makerere—which have hitherto remained implied, assumed and sometimes unacknowledged—more into the open. Documenting the particular circumstances where capacity building has occurred may help draw out lessons with more general applicability, which could allow IDRC to capitalize, more than it has in the past, on opportunities for strengthening organizational partnerships.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a Canadian crown corporation, created to help developing countries find solutions to the social, economic, and natural resource problems they face. Support is directed to building indigenous research capacity. Because strengthening and mobilizing research capacity is a cornerstone of IDRC’s work, in 2005 the Evaluation Unit launched a strategic evaluation on capacity development focusing on the processes and results of IDRC support of its Southern partners. The evaluation design and studies can be found at: www.idrc.ca/en/ev-70623-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Cambodia's Ecological Sustainability:

Organizational Case Study of Cambodia's Ministry of Environment (MoE)
by Cor Veer

IDRC support to build the research capacities of a broad base of actors involved in the policy making process addresses wider governance challenges to improve environment and natural resource management (ENRM) in Cambodia.

Cambodia's emergence from two decades of mass violence opened a new era marked by fresh opportunities—but also profound challenges. After the UN-organized elections of 1993, the country's economy grew considerably, poverty began to drop, and some positive outcomes were reported in health and education.

Within this context of change and transformation, IDRC saw the potential to help improve the circumstances of Cambodia's poor while avoiding the environmental degradation that might be expected to accompany an economic boom. Since 80 per cent of Cambodia's 14 million citizens are rural people dependent upon agriculture and natural resources, IDRC reasoned that ensuring the sustainability of the resource base would be critical for ensuring livelihoods for the rural poor.

But there were obstacles to this goal. Re-building public administration at the local, provincial and national levels has been a massive challenge affecting all sectors including environment and natural resource management. In addition, Cambodia's political economy has traditionally been distinguished by a complex social web of relationships based on hierarchy and authority. In the natural resources sector, there was evidence in the early 1990s that this system of political patronage was leading to the consolidation of land and resource ownership by the wealthy, with the poor increasingly marginalized. Despite a program of governance reform and decentralization of power, Cambodia remained a difficult country in which to seek more equitable resource management.

The search for entry points

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) was established in 1993 with a broad mandate to promote environmental protection and natural resource conservation. The multi-or inter-sectoral nature of environment has meant that the Ministry has had to grow into its role over time, establishing effective relationships with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors working on 'green, blue and brown' issues (forests and protected areas; water resources and fisheries; and mineral resources and land management).

The development of over-arching policies and the importance of collaboration and coordination became focal points for IDRC's capacity development efforts with the Ministry. According to Veer, these efforts unfolded in four distinct (but overlapping) phases: institutional development (1992-1997), policy research through key projects (1997 – 2002), capacity development through networks (2000 – 2005) and knowledge generation for policy influence through communities of practice (2005 to the present).

Findings from the case study suggest that IDRC's progression from an almost singular organizational focus on the Ministry towards a more multi-issue and multi-actor systems approach to knowledge generation is in keeping with the lessons that have emerged from an OECD-DAC study that reviewed institutional capacity development in environment.¹

Building an inverted knowledge pyramid: From top to base

Between 1992 and 1997, IDRC participated in a multilateral effort to build arrangements and linkages, helping define the structure, mandate, responsibilities, and create a work-plan for the new MoE (known in the beginning as the State Secretariat for Environment). Cambodia's environment ministry had little capacity to develop policy frameworks for environmental management. There was also uncertainty over which branches of government had actual control over specific environmental issues. It became clear, therefore, that fostering sustainable resource management practices locally would require significant institutional development at higher levels. For example, moving away from legislation by decree (which had been the norm) towards evidence-based policy-making would require building research capacity and fostering a culture of respect for field-based research within Cambodia's MoE.

A strategic element in this institutional development phase was the provision of a senior policy-advisor in the governmental/non-governmental consortium known as the Cambodian Environmental Management Program (CEMP)—an initiative that wound down prematurely after the withdrawal of a major donor in reaction to political turbulence.

Despite the uncertain political climate, substantial progress had been made on national-level work to create institutional and policy frameworks. IDRC turned its attention (from 1997 through 2002) to four field projects designed to encourage participatory resource management regimes in local communities. Engaging actors at all levels of government—local, provincial, and national—as well as a local university, these projects focused on issues like securing the rights of ethnic minorities to their land and resources, community-based fisheries and solutions to overfishing, and community forestry research. Operating under a MoE mandate, the projects worked with governmental and non-governmental actors, seeking both practical gains at the field level and continued research and technical capacity-building within the Ministry.

In the policy research project section of his report, Veer focuses on the capacity-building results of two emblematic efforts: the Participatory Management of Coastal Resources (PMCR) initiative and the Community Forest Research Project (CFRP). While Veer found that staff from both projects had differing levels of acceptance and understanding of participatory, community-based methods, both projects had significant success in developing and testing approaches to support and strengthen community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)

¹ OECD-DAC *Donor Support for Institutional Capacity Development in Environment: Lessons Learned*. Evaluation and Effectiveness Report no. 3. Paris (2000).

Participatory research skills were developed through multiple means such as training courses, workshops, and local learning events. The deployment of foreign advisors as mentors and, in some cases, the opportunity for team leaders and other key employees to study overseas also had positive impacts. In fact, Veer says that partly because of efforts like these “it is clear that IDRC has contributed considerably in Cambodia to creating a significantly larger and higher quality pool of experts in sustainable development.”

Results emerging from the policy research projects suggested that policy making for ENRM could be better enhanced by building a resilient network of researchers from both inside and outside of the government. Between 2000 and 2005, a group of MoE staff and advisers joined other researchers to form the core of the CBNRM case study initiative, an action research strategy that documented ENRM innovations through ten case studies. The case study initiative was the backbone of a networking effort that communicated lessons emerging from field research projects through the Coastal Resources Research (CoRR) network and its successor, the regional LeaRN (Learning and Research Networking) initiative. One of the main results of these networks has been the creation of the independent CBNRM Learning Institute, which offers training programs, support for graduate students, and technical and policy assistance to government agencies.

Looking ahead

Veer concludes that “the capacity developed by key MoE personnel involved in IDRC supported activities for about one decade, has contributed to their design of a new organizational arrangement to enable them (MoE) to assist a wider range of key actors to acquire capacity for participatory research and development.” The role of the Ministry of Environment has increasingly become that of strategic partner in developing the capacity of others. According to Veer, “the greater challenge for the MoE may be... the need for coordination or collaboration with the large number of ‘other related ministries with the direct mandate of supporting rational use of natural resources’ (World Bank, 2003).” For the immediate future, IDRC’s approach to nesting its support to the Ministry in a broader strategy of capacity development for multiple actors may continue to make sense.

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An Enduring Partnership:

Organizational Case Study of Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD)
by Marie-Hélène Adrien and Martin Carrier

By building a culture of applied research to tackle development issues, IDRC has provided direct organizational support and has engaged one-to-one with researchers in one of Africa's oldest universities.

Almost two decades of IDRC support to capacity development at Senegal's Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) have strengthened researchers by increasing knowledge, expertise, visibility, and professional opportunities. Paradoxically though, the greater capacity a researcher acquires, the greater seem to be the chances that he or she may be drawn away from Africa to more attractive research opportunities in Europe or North America.

The case study found that like most of their colleagues elsewhere in Africa, researchers at UCAD – one of the most respected universities in West Africa – face innumerable challenges in pursuing their research interests. For one, UCAD's adherence to a framework established by the African and Malagasy Council of Higher Education (CAMES) means that pure research is prioritized over the type of applied research that addresses development issues. UCAD has no budget for research, which means chronic shortages of resources for research, limited infrastructure, and inadequate or outdated equipment. Teaching loads can be so great as to leave staff little time for research.

Understandably, these problems often lead to “brain drain,” when university staff are lured to overseas institutions by better salaries and more favorable conditions for research. “You have to have very strong beliefs and a deep commitment to our country to stay when everything – the working conditions, a researcher's salary, the lack of recognition for our work – pushes us toward positions elsewhere,” says one UCAD professor interviewed for the study. “I have turned down two offers in France, knowing that if I accepted, the chances were very good that I would never return.”

In this challenging context, over the past decade IDRC has played three roles in terms of capacity support to UCAD—*financial partner*, *technical advisor*, and *liaison agent* with external partners. IDRC has become UCAD's most important partner in supporting research, with over \$8 million invested in projects since 1989. Although funding for research is at the core of the Centre's relationship with UCAD, IDRC staff's deep understanding of Senegal and of UCAD researchers has solidified the partnership. It has allowed the Centre to work with UCAD to identify the major development issues facing the country and to find local solutions through research, an approach the evaluation found that is appreciated within both UCAD and government circles. The physical proximity of IDRC's West Africa Regional Office (WARO) in Dakar to the UCAD campus and the fact that a number of WARO staff are former UCAD researchers have helped to deepen and facilitate relations. Key informants from UCAD and the Senegalese government noted that although research funded by IDRC had to be aligned with IDRC programs, this requirement had never constrained local research priorities and needs.

An emphasis on individuals

The major contribution of IDRC projects to capacity development at UCAD has been to the capacities of individual researchers or research teams to do research related activities. The most obvious benefits to researchers at UCAD have been in acquiring knowledge, competencies, or expertise in their field. Other results have included an increase in the quantity of research and publications; higher visibility and renown for UCAD researchers on the international scene; broader professional horizons for researchers through assignments for governments or development agencies; greater opportunities for networking; and, better access to funding.

These positive outcomes were achieved through a variety of methods, depending on the nature of the project. In some cases, thematic experts, researchers, or resource people were made available to the UCAD research team. This was true in the project “Distance learning: information and communication technologies for basic education in Senegal,” which brought in ICT specialists from the University of Ottawa.

In other cases, training sessions were built into projects and secretariats – such as a series of workshops to train researchers in the methodology used in the ecosystem approach to human health. Seminars, conferences and workshops are another method, one that was part of the project “Seminar/workshop on tobacco control policy in Senegal.” Support to networks that allow researchers to exchange knowledge, resources and tools was also found to have contributed to capacity development, notably in the case of the Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA).

Researchers at UCAD have also sharpened their skills through grants for study abroad, a mechanism used by five individuals in the project “Institutionalisation of gender, rights and women’s citizenship in higher education at UCAD.” IDRC has also invested in improving equipment and infrastructure, helped with publishing and disseminating research, and in setting up documentation centres.

A focus on organization and institution

Beyond the level of individual capacities, some projects with UCAD had encouraging results in increasing capacity at the organizational level in various aspects of research for development. For instance, IDRC helped create the ICT Resource Centre within UCAD’s Computer and Mathematics Department. This Centre developed capacities for managing research, for communicating research findings, and for making the research relevant to society. Similar capacities were developed by the Applied Economic Research Centre (CREA), which IDRC helped establish through SISERA. However, owing to difficulties within CREA, the research team that had been trained through IDRC support broke away to form the Economic and Social Research Consortium (CRES), still associated with UCAD but on a different operating basis. CRES is now a dynamic research group recognized and consulted by national decision-makers.

In recent years, some of IDRC's capacity development efforts aimed to create a stronger link between supply and demand in research. The goal has been to stimulate research that is more influential and useful to decision-makers. Some progress has been made in this respect, notably the role assumed by CRES in undertaking economic research commissioned by the State or multilateral agencies. Although the emergence of a national culture receptive to Senegalese research goes well beyond IDRC's mandate and mission, WARO is contributing by acting as an interlocutor between the UCAD research community and various government departments and agencies, organizing seminars and conferences on pertinent policy issues, and supporting publications such as CRES research syntheses that presented research results in capsule format.

The UCAD case study revealed certain shortcomings on the part of IDRC in capacity development. One of these was in the area of uptake and use of project evaluation findings. The case study authors found that these findings have not been systematically shared with UCAD researchers resulting in a lost opportunity to extract lessons that can be applied in future endeavours.

Looking ahead

The case study also points to other areas of capacity development that UCAD researchers believed could be useful. These include better training for researchers in project management skills, and study grants to Senegalese researchers to master English and thereby overcome a language barrier between themselves and much of the anglophone research world. UCAD researchers also mentioned that a culture of research could be more firmly entrenched at UCAD through support for studying at universities where teaching methods allow for more innovation and experimentation.

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Strengthening the Core and the Periphery: Organizational Case Study of the Peru Economic and Social Research Consortium (CIES) by Katrina Rojas and Mariane Arsenault

IDRC support to the CIES demonstrates how the Centre can act as a catalyst and a facilitator for a network that brings together multiple research and political perspectives.

The Peru Economic Research Consortium (CIE in Spanish, the predecessor to CIES) originated at the end of the 1980s amidst political and economic instability. During this time, Peru grappled not only with unprecedented recession and hyperinflation but also with the most violent guerrilla insurgency in the region. This situation was worsened by fluctuating State approaches to macroeconomic management and deepening poverty. It was within this context that IDRC and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) agreed to finance five Peruvian research centres to join as a consortium in order to conduct applied economic research and attempt to prevent more social science researchers from leaving the country.

CIE's original mission was to generate applied research, build the capacities of its researchers, promote dialogue among researchers and improve the quality of policy debate. After ten years, CIE had established its credibility and the Consortium's stakeholders viewed its results in positive terms. The 1990s brought greater macroeconomic stability and Peru entered a period of impressive economic growth. Economic growth did not, however, translate into social equity. High rates of poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, and wide social gaps still persisted.

This context also presented challenges for research for development: the scarcity of government resources for social science research meant that research, including that of the Consortium, depended heavily on external funding. In addition, the public investment in tertiary education had created a gap in the research capacity of Peru's public and private universities with a marked difference between those in the capital city of Lima and those in the provinces.

Under the backdrop of this contextual change, the sustainability of CIE's existing model came under question. IDRC and CIDA worked with Consortium members to create a new form of collaboration and governance. This new plan for partnership included:

- the addition of social policy issues to the research agenda; 'CIE' became 'CIES'
- a thrust to have research results considered by policymakers, as Peru did not have a tradition of evidence-based policymaking and evaluation; and,
- a shift to research grant allocation through competitions from its original pro rata basis.

Responding to changes

According to the case study, IDRC's support helped CIES become the well-respected institution it is today. It now has more than three dozen members, including private and public universities, private consulting firms, non-governmental organizations and government institutions, and the Consortium is involved in

a wide range of additional activities such as training, seminars and the publication of books and journals.

CIES has developed an array of support services to strengthen the research capacity of both its member organizations and their associated researchers. These include mentoring younger researchers and less experienced researchers (often from the provinces) throughout the research process, training researchers, providing internship/research awards, promoting cooperation among centres, implementing specific projects with funding from other donors and providing services to its members such as bibliographic research, publication dissemination, and negotiating access to databases.

The study notes that the Executive Office's administrative capacity has also been enhanced. It has acquired the ability to mobilise additional financial resources and to manage those resources using increasingly sophisticated systems. As CIES funding grew and became more diversified, IDRC/CIDA funding fell from 76% of the CIES financial resources in 2000 to 51% in 2006.

Strengthening the core has helped improve the organizational capacities of partner centres, particularly in the provinces. The long-term support for grant competitions has allowed organizations to plan their research agenda, in some cases establish and build a track record for their research program, and recruit young researchers and analysts. The evaluators found that winning a CIES competition gives credibility to the competing organization and may lead to other sources of funding.

At the systems level, CIES has built a body of Peruvian research and knowledge, and preserved a critical mass of researchers active in the country, creating a more enabling research environment.

Facilitating public debate

Strengthening CIES has supported the development of closer ties to public institutions and greater opportunities to influence public policy, concluded the case study. In 2003, for instance, CIES signed an agreement with the country's congress to provide technical support and consulting on current issues to the Parliamentary Research Centre (CIP, by its Spanish acronym). In 2006, CIES held workshops with congressional committees on draft laws on the legislative agenda. Individual Consortium researchers are also regularly called upon to directly advise high-ranking officials and to participate in policy formulation and assessment committees and/or social programmes. To maximise its influence on public policymaking, the organization has also become increasingly visible in the media and public fora.

Learning by doing

The case study noted IDRC's approach to supporting CIES reflects several of the identified 'good practices' that contribute to capacity development. IDRC, which has provided core funding to the Consortium since 1989, has used a 'reflect and learn' approach to its relationship with CIES. Mainly, it has responded to the expressed needs of the network, a strategy CIES values for the flexibility and autonomy it affords the Consortium. This in turn has translated into a locally defined research and organizational agenda.

The construction of partnerships between IDRC and the Executive Office, Board members, and associated researchers has also been fundamental. In particular, the study highlights the opportunity to establish friendly professional relationships built on trust between IDRC Program Officers and CIES (its Executive Office, members of the Board and some of the researchers

representing partner organizations). IDRC also facilitated relationship-building between CIES and other organizations or individuals outside of Peru (for example: FOCAL and international consultants).

Other strengths of IDRC's approach that were noted by the case study as supporting capacity development at CIES include the generally well-coordinated efforts among IDRC's different divisions that are working with CIES (Programs, Partnership Division, and Grant Administration) as well as its work in partnership with CIDA.

According to the authors of the study, the long-term engagement and the continuity of IDRC support have been vital to CIES' success. IDRC's perseverance and commitment particularly at the main turning points in the Consortium's evolution demonstrates that the Centre can act as *catalyst* and *facilitator* in a difficult context and during reform processes.

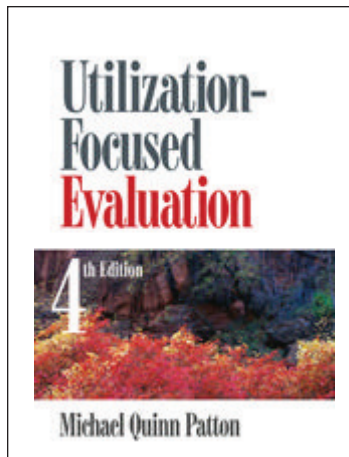
The case study reveals that there are also certain challenges within IDRC's relationship with CIES. For example, variability of budget allocations and changes in strategies have the potential for repercussions on initiative development. The report noted that these aspects could limit IDRC's opportunities when longer-term visions and commitments are required, especially in terms of what can be conveyed to the partners. Another challenge could come from CIES simultaneously receiving funds from multiple programs. This challenge could become more acute in the future in the absence of concerted coordination among the different programs of the Centre. Finally, pressures to approve new projects may also limit organizational capacity development efforts that require a long-term perspective and sustained engagement.

Looking ahead

With regard to the future, CIES remains important to Peru as the State renews its attention to social development avenues for the poor. The case study authors highlight ongoing challenges to CIES' organizational development that will require attention, including the need to increase support via linkages and strategic intelligence, and revising governance structures.

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Section 4. The Influence of IDRC's Work in Evaluation



This section of ACE is included annually in order to provide Governors examples of how IDRC's evaluation work is influencing academia, development agencies, and evaluation practitioners and thinkers. The following excerpts are taken from Dr. Michael Quinn Patton's best-selling book "Utilization Focused Evaluation: 4th Edition," an influential text in the field of evaluation.

Based on Dr. Patton's work with IDRC on developing the CAF and rPCR process, he features how IDRC infused evaluative thinking into its mandate. The quotes below demonstrate his assessment that the Centre is an accountable learning-organization.

"Nowhere are evaluative thinking and mainstreaming evaluation as integral to organizational culture better illustrated than in the Corporate Assessment Framework of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) headquartered in Ottawa, Canada.... This was the first organization I had encountered that made infusing evaluative thinking into the organizational culture an explicit dimension for performance measurement. IDRC's shift in emphasis is a premiere example of process use. In essence, the senior management committed not only to supporting the conduct and use of specific high-quality evaluation studies and management information system data, they made evaluative thinking a fundamental way of doing business, infused throughout the culture." ...

"At the same time that IDRC was making evaluative thinking a priority area for overall organizational assessment, senior management was having to face a concrete reality at the most basic level: Project managers were not completing required end-of-project reports. Indeed, they had accumulated a backlog of hundreds of unfinished project completion reports." ...

"The project report backlog was completely cleared, and feedback about the process is highly positive. The organization-wide process of involving people in reflection and learning reinforces evaluative thinking as a core operating principle while also meeting accountability demands to get reports done in a timely and meaningful fashion. The capacity of staff to engage in evaluation thinking has been systematically enhanced, including deepening their interviewing skills, pattern recognition capabilities, and data interpretation skills. The attention garnered for projects featured at the Annual Learning Forum and the direct involvement of senior management provides additional

incentives to take the process seriously and document both learning and results. The Project Completion Reports, long disdained, became a source of energy and enlightenment, and a manifestation of evaluative thinking infused into the organizational culture. This redesign of IDRC's reporting process illustrates nicely the insight of *Future Shock* author Alvin Toffler (1970) who observed, 'The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.'"

Final Evaluation of Connectivity Africa

IDRC commissioned a final evaluation of Connectivity Africa (CA), as the program funded by the Canada Fund for Africa came to an end this past year. It complemented the Acacia External Review conducted in 2005. Overall, the evaluators concluded that the program had moved towards the achievement of its objectives. The emphasis of the objectives was on African capacity and the evaluation documented examples of how capacity was built, and found strong networks that should take the capacity into the future.

The results of Connectivity Africa can be broken down into broad headlines by theme:

- **Innovation in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs):** Low cost alternatives have been demonstrated.
- **African Regional ICTs:** The cadre of researchers have explored the regional connectivity, and found a voice to argue their case for better connectivity.
- **Research and Development in African ICTs:** Connectivity Africa has been able to involve research institutions in a number of key activities that could have longer term impact, while at the same time building research capabilities.
- **Partnerships and Networks:** This theme focused on the need for partnerships and networks. In terms of policy influence, CA was looking for communities of change, and has succeeded.

A summary of the evaluation is in annex 5 and the full evaluation can be found at: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-114579-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

Section 5 : Conclusion

The Annual Corporate Evaluation (ACE) report this year provides Governors an overview and update of the elements of the Centre's evaluation system and a summary of the findings from 5 case-studies on organizational capacity development.

Next year, as described in detail in annex 2, program-led evaluations are to be conducted on topics ranging from individual projects like the Middle East Good Governance Fund to various ICT4D, Policy and Economic Poverty, and African Transitional Justice networks to capacity building efforts in resource mobilization and with feminist organizations. The strategic evaluations of IDRC's participation in large conferences and IDRC's objective to support Southern capacity development will also be completed. These evaluations will be reported to Governors in next year's ACE report.

The presentation of evaluation findings and assurance that the Centre's evaluation system is functioning is intended to assist Governors in monitoring corporate performance and ensuring that the Centre uses evaluation as a tool for both learning and accountability. The strategic direction of the Centre is set in the Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010 and in the program prospecti. Over the next three years, Governors will be presented the findings of the external reviews by program area (2009-ENRM; 2010-SEP; and, 2011-ICT4D and IPS). External reviews are the Centre's primary accountability tool at the program level as they provide an independent, informed assessment about how programs are performing, the extent to which they met their objectives, and their results and effectiveness. The external reviews are one input into the formulation of future programming directions at the corporate and program levels and have been timed to support the planning and approval process.

Annex 1: Acronyms

ACE	Annual Corporate Evaluation Report
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
ART	Anti-Retroviral Treatment
CA	Connectivity Africa
CAF.....	Corporate Assessment Framework
CASID	Canadian Association for Studies in International Development
CATIA.....	Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CCAA	Climate Change and Adaptation in Africa
CD	Capacity Development
CfSK.....	Computers for Schools Kenya
CTAP	Centre Training and Awards Program
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CEA	Connectivity and Equity in the Americas
CEMP	Cambodian Environmental Management Program
CIE.....	Economic Research Consortium
CIES.....	Economic and Social Research Consortium
CoPEH.....	Community of Practice in Ecohealth
CREA.....	Applied Economic Research Centre
CRES	Economic and Social Research Consortium
CRR.....	Coastal Resources Research
CSPF	Corporate Strategy and Program Framework
CSVr	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPA	Director of Program Area
EcoHealth	Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health Program Initiative
ENRM	Environment and Natural Resource Management Program Area

EU	Evaluation Unit
FMFI	First Mile, First Inch
FRAO	Fondation Rurale pour l’Afrique de l’Ouest
GAD.....	Grant Administration Division
GEH	Governance, Equity and Health Program Initiative
GGP	Globalization, Growth and Poverty Program Initiative
GHRI	Global Health Research Initiative
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICA	Institute for Connectivity in the Americas
ICRA.....	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development Program Area
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEPRI	Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales
IPS	Innovation, Policy and Science Program Area
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean
MEI	Middle East Initiative
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHIN	Mozambique Health Information Network
MICTI	Mozambique Information and Communication Technology Institute Incubator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MRC.....	South African Medical Research Council
PA	Program Area
PB Corp	Programs Branch Corporate Project
PBDD	Partnerships and Business Development Division
PCD	Peace, Conflict and Development Program Initiative
PDAAs	Personal Digital Assistants
PEP.....	Poverty and Economic Policy Network

PI	Program Initiative
PICTA	Partnership for ICTs in Africa
PL.....	Program Leader
PO	Program Officer
PPB	Program and Partnership Branch
PPG	Policy and Planning Group
RD	Regional Director
RHE.....	Research on Health Equity Program Initiative
RIJA.....	African Legal Information Network
RITC	Research for International Tobacco Control
RLNR	Rural Livelihoods and Natural Resources
RO	Research Officer
RPE	Rural Poverty and Environment Program Initiative
rPCR	rolling Project Completion Report
SEP	Social and Economic Policy Program Area
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SID	Special Initiatives Division
SISERA	Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa
SMC	Senior Management Committee
UCAD.....	Université Cheikh Anta Diop
UFE	Utilization Focused Evaluation
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UHIN.....	Uganda Health Information Network
UPE	Urban Poverty and Environment Program Initiative
WARO	Regional Office for West and Central Africa
WiMax.....	Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access
WRC	Women's Rights and Citizenship Program Initiative

Annex 2: Evaluation Plan 2008-2009

The following table shows the evaluations that Programs are undertaking during 2008/2009. Where available, budget information is included in parenthesis after the title of the evaluation. All figures are indicative.

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Environment and Natural Resource Management (ENRM)		
Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health (EcoHealth)	Evaluation of policy influence of COPEH in Africa and Latin America (\$80,000)	UNEP-led evaluation of the EcoHealth Regional Funds External Program Review (\$155,000)
Rural Poverty and the Environment (RPE)	Nagaland Tracer Study	Nine Cases in South East Asia, Evaluation of Capacity output Evaluation of ICRAF Projects in the Sahel External Program Review (\$155,000)
Urban Poverty and the Environment (UPE)		External Program Review and Mid term Review of the Focus Cities Research Initiative (\$170,000)
Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA)		Mid-Term Review (\$78,000)
Environmental Economics		External Program Review (\$35,000)
Social and Economic Policy (SEP)		
Globalization, Growth and Poverty (GGP)	PEP Evaluation External Program Review	
Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD)	Institutional Evaluation for the Institute of Comparative Studies and Criminal Law in Guatemala (ICCGP) Evaluation of Globalization Competition finalists (IEPRI and SDPI) Africa Transitional Justice Research Network (CSVN) External Program Review	Conflict Evaluation (\$100,000)
Women's Rights and Citizenship (WRC)	WRC Capacity Building Evaluation Decentralization Conference Evaluation External Program Review	Evaluation of Training Institute on Women's Rights, Citizenship and Governance in Sub Saharan Africa
Research on Health Equity (RHE)	Partnerships in GEH Evaluation of RITC Small Grants Program External Program Review	GEH Gender Evaluation (\$50,000) Evaluation of RITC Pilot Program on Mentorship

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)		
Pan Asia	Evaluation of the Digital Review of Asia Pacific Project Summative Study of Policy Influence (\$100,000) External evaluation of selected PAN projects (\$100,000)	Formative Evaluation of PAN's Networking Approach (\$60,000)
Institute for Connectivity in the Americas/ Connectivity and Equity in the Americas (ICA/CEA)		
ACACIA	Acacia Networks Evaluation (\$200,000 plus external funding)	African Network Operators Group (AFNOG) Training Workshops and Network Capacity Building (\$20,000) Gender Acacia Program Evaluation / Research Capacity Building Acacia Program Evaluation (\$350,000)
Telecentre.org	Telecentre Academy Telecentre Workshops Learning Social Impact of Public Access Computing	
Special Initiatives Division (SID) and Other Program Units		
Canadian Partnerships	Middle East Good Governance Fund Evaluation (\$100,000)	Canadian Council of Areas Studies Learned Societies Evaluation
Partnership and Business Development Division	Capacity Building in Resource Mobilization (\$45,000)	
Innovation, Policy and Science (IPS)		
Information, Technology and Science (ITS)		African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) Evaluation (\$165,000)
Evaluation Unit		
	Evaluability Assessment of The Centre's Flex Funds Reach and Impact of Outcome Mapping (\$50,000)	Strategic Evaluation on Capacity Building (\$340,000) Evaluation Findings on the Design and Implementation of Competitive Grants Processes (\$20,000)
Communications Division		
		Strategic Evaluation of Large Conferences (in partnership with the Evaluation Unit and PPB) (60,000\$)

Annex 3: Evaluation Reports Received by the Evaluation Unit 2007-2008

Project and Program Evaluation Reports, Received 2007-2008						
Title, Author(s), Date	Inventory Number	Related PA: PI, Sec, External Org.	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country/Region	
1- An External Review of the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT - Phase 1) , Supperamaniam Manickam, 17/08/2007	610	GGP	102568	2004-2007	Pan Asia	
2- Building Learning Systems for Honduras Development , William (Bill) Edwardson, Brenda Bucheli, 16/08/2007	620	RPE	100133	2002-2006	Honduras	
3- Canadian Council of Areas Studies Learned Societies (CCASLS) , Stephen Tyler, Lynne Tyler, 01/09/2006	611	SID	103792	2003-2006	Canada	
4- Capacity Building through the IDRC-APC Relationship (1996-2006) . Terri Willard, 10/02/2008	Website	Evaluation Unit	001269, 004428, 100994, 102606, 102508, 102900, 103592, 003219, 004551-001, 100866, 101395, 101849-002, 102693, 102982, 103523, 104172-001, 003476, 100505, 101746, 101972-001, 103707, 004124, 102899	1996-2006	Global	
5- Documenting Outputs Outcomes and Learning From Ecohealth Projects: Communicable Diseases Chagas Disease , Roberto Briceño-León, 01/02/2007 Dengue , Héctor Gómez Dantés, 01/03/2007	622	EcoHealth EcoHealth	110797, 110797 100999, 101545, 101091-004, 101814, 101091-003	2004-2007 2000-2006	LAC LAC	
Malaria in Africa and Mexico Ecohealth Projects , David Bradley, 01/10/07		EcoHealth	103694, 100927, 101090	2000-2006	Mexico, Africa	
6- Evaluating the MERCOSUR Network , Gary McMahon, Fernando Porta, 22/07/2007	624	GGP	102922, 050292, 101490	1999-2006	LAC	
7- IDRC-ENRM Capacity Development Efforts in Algeria , Karim El-Jisr, Hammou Laamrani, 22/07/2007	621	ENRM	104112	2004-2006	Algeria	
8- In Focus Evaluation , Wendy Quarry, Ricardo Ramirez, 30/04/2007	619	Communications Division	Not applicable	2002-2006	Global	
9- Making the Edible Landscape: Participatory Planning, Design and Development of Garden Neighbourhoods - Evaluation Report , Michel Frojmovic, 06/03/2007	612	UPE	102440	2005-2006	Global	
10- Regional Water Demand Initiative for the Middle East and North Africa , Katharina Welle, Nighisty Ghezae, Ramzi Naaman, 16/07/2007	609	RPE	101806	2004-2006	MENA	

Title, Author(s), Date	Inventory Number	Related PA: PI, Sec, External Org.	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country/Region
11- Tracer Study of Awards Programs Supported by IDRC: Internships, Professional Development Awards, Young Canadian Researchers Awards, Doctoral Research Awards, and Canadian Window on International Development , Michael Graham, 01/03/2008	625	Centre Awards and Training	103342, 103902, 101924, 101924, 101290, 100821, 100427, 004525, 004049, 002341, 831014, 841023, 851021, 861009, 871001, 881005, 891001, 901010, 911025, 000962, 000688, 921201, 103342	1995-2006	Global
12- Evaluation à Mi-Parcours des Outils de Communication , Fondation Rurale de L'Afrique de L'Ouest, 27/03/07	623	RPE	100663	2007-	West Africa
13- Building Research Capacity One Person at a Time: IDRC and Makerere University , Charles Lusthaus, Anette Wenderoth, Miranda Cobb, 15/02/2008	Website	Evaluation Unit	000768003, 003018-002, 003129-002, 003931-001, 055405-001, 100224, 100317, 055432-001, 101061, 101142, 101900, 102628, 102155, 102660-003, 102750-002, 102283-012, 102512, 103675, 103126, 103517, 103114, 102508	1999-2006	Uganda
14- Évaluation Stratégique du Renforcement des Capacités de recherche des partenaires du CRDI – Étude de cas de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop , Marie-Hélène Adrien, Martin Carrier,	Website	Evaluation Unit	880204, 890022, 881010, 900020, 890074, 900153, 890260, 891017, 901004, 900003, 901024, 931350, 931352, 65013, 931005, 65022, 65223, 65225, 65296, 100121, 065077-038, 065077-042, 101230, 065077-059, 065077-072, 065077-078, 065077-084, 065077-089, 065077-098, 065077-099, 102280, 102542, 102889, 103502, 103582, 103111, 104029	1994-2006	West Africa

Annex 4: Good Practices that Contribute to Capacity Development⁶

Good Practices That Contribute to Capacity Development	Manifested in IDRC through:
IDRC Characteristics	
Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained mentoring • Continuity, prolonged engagement • Iterative learning process • Aim to build legitimacy, credibility and trust
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding arrangements • Location within Canadian government system • Agility to respond to developing country needs
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay engaged under difficult circumstances • Provide legitimacy, credibility and trust
Building Partnerships	
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks of individuals and organizations/institutions • Inter-organizational linkages • Face-to-face interactions between/among IDRC staff and researchers • Providing legitimacy and credibility to partners and beneficiaries
Harnessing Existing Capacities	
Strategic Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan locally and globally, reinvent locally – regional presence to determine existing capacities • Staff knowledge of regions
Build on existing capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained mentoring – provide long-term support beyond “one-off training” sessions • Regional presence – to determine existing capacities • Use local, existing capacities rather than creating parallel systems
Relevance of the Problem	
Locally-driven agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local ownership • Local and global participation in determining the agenda • Programs continually evolving to meet developing country demands • Bring Southern perspectives and voices to the analysis of development challenges • Support devolvement of major research initiatives when appropriate

⁶ Adapted from the *DAC Journal*, “Strengthening Procurement Capacities in Developing Countries” (2003) and IDRC’s Corporate Assessment Framework, 2006.

Connectivity Africa (CA) External Review

Report to IDRC's Senior Management Committee (June 2007)

By Dr. Simon Batchelor, Mr. Moctar Sow (with comments by Dr. Nigel Scott)

1. Program Aims

1.1 At the June 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada announced three initiatives as part of its response to the G8 Africa Action Plan and the recommendations of the Digital Opportunity Task Force. One of the three initiatives was Connectivity Africa (CA): a program to improve access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa.

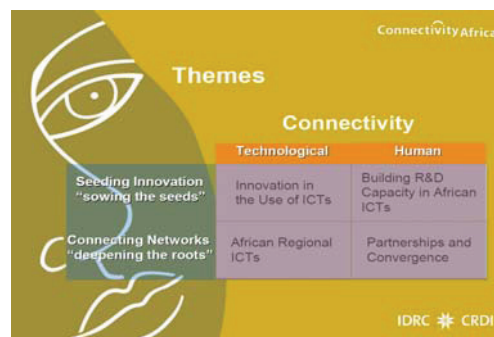
The CA website describes the core program areas as themes and states:

1. **Innovation in the use of Information Communications Technologies** Helping Africans adapt new, low-cost ICTs that have particular relevance to African development.
2. **Partnerships and Convergence** Encouraging African institutions, communities, and individuals to increase their influence and impact by working together.
3. **Building Research and Development (R&D) Capacity in African ICTs** Helping Africans build the capacity to develop uniquely African ICT innovations tailored to local needs and preferences.
4. **African Regional Information Communications Technologies** Breaking down the technical barriers that prevent Africans from connecting easily to one another.

In order to understand the relationship between the themes, the IDRC CA Team Leader presented the following matrix to the advisory group.

Acknowledging that Africa's digital divide is not just a question of technology but of human capacity as well, the matrix offers two columns – human and technological. For the rows the matrix takes the imagery of seeds. Africa needs “seeds”, i.e. new approaches, new adaptation of technologies, new capabilities in order to make the most from ICTs.

Also the emerging plants need to deepen their roots and be strengthened; CA saw that this strengthening would come through networks – both technological infrastructure and people.



2. Review Methodology

2.1 This external review was conducted by Dr. Simon Batchelor with the assistance of Mr Moctar Sow. Dr Batchelor was team leader for the external review of Acacia in 2005, and there is considerable overlap of the stakeholders, partners and staff between Acacia and Connectivity Africa.

2.2 The evaluation team used a mix of primary and secondary data sources. The data collection methods included document review, individual and group interviews, observation, and field visits. Data collection began in January 2007, with most activities concentrated in the month

of March 2007. Field visits included South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Senegal and Burkina Faso and London.

2.3 Connectivity Africa has often funded multiple projects that work together for a common theme. The field visits resulted in interviewing stakeholders involved in over 30 funded projects, although these projects can be conceptualised as 13 clusters or suites of projects. The case studies represent 52% of all disbursed project funding. The geographical coverage reflected and was representative of the whole program. The sample was able to give insight to projects with small funding such as FRAO Senegal and Harambee, and large multi year funded programs of work such as the UHIN/MHIN cluster. The sample also covers a mix of programs that were single country focused and regional activities. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with donors and international agencies. Those approached included DFID, Industry Canada, UNECA, CIDA, SIDA and IDRC.

3. Review Findings

3.1 From the case studies, which are in themselves a good representation of the program as a whole, it is clear that CA has addressed the themes. Connectivity Africa has not been a technology oriented program. It has been a balanced mix of technical and social innovation and network building. It has built the capacity of people at various levels – at university level among the IT literate, at national level among policy makers, and at district level among field workers and teachers. This balance of emphasis on technology and people is a considerable strength of the program.

3.2 Each of the projects has made significant progress towards their individual project objectives and since they were chosen against criteria representing the whole program, they contribute to the program objectives. The overall program has seen movement towards the objectives. The emphasis of the objectives is on African capacity. There are clear examples of how capacity has been built, and there are strong networks that should take the capacity into the future.

3.3 As a systematic theme identifiable throughout CA programming, a focus on encouraging a change in gender roles has not been particularly evident. This statement needs to be held in context – CA and Acacia PI are both implemented by the same team. As such, there has been a tendency to treat it as one program. Acacia has undertaken significant applied research regarding the participation of African women in the information society e.g., Grace.net and Régentic. While these projects do suggest that the program team are gender aware, nevertheless there does seem to be a lacking of gender awareness as a cross cutting theme in all the projects.

The results of Connectivity Africa can be broken down into broad headlines by theme.

3.4 **Innovation in the Use of ICTs** Low cost alternatives have been demonstrated. In particular:

- the use of wireless technologies over distance in order to share bandwidth across local institutions (Schools, Government Centres, Telecentres and Medical facilities). There is a danger that the technical output of such experiments will be overtaken by new technologies (eg WiMax), however, the people networks and capacity built are valuable in the longer term.

- refurbished computers have been shown to be a viable mainstream low cost technology for schools
- the use of PDAs have been demonstrated as a viable means of collecting field data, and for a two way flow of information including personal professional development

3.4.1 A cadre of Africans have explored and learnt about wireless technologies. Their capacities have increased, and whichever direction the technology goes, their confidence to innovate has been increased. This confidence to explore is a valuable commodity in ICTs. ICTs is an ever changing sector, and new opportunities and possibilities are constantly arising. If people have gained a confidence that just says, “I could try and see if it works”, then that alone is of incredible value.

3.4.2 Demonstrating the innovative use of ICTs has influenced policy makers. For instance, MRC in South Africa has been able to gain a view on information management within the South African health system which has changed from disease orientation to a patient focus. It is clear that CfSK and UHIN have influenced policy makers in Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique. In addition to this the projects, and hence the program, may have influenced policy makers beyond their immediate stakeholders. These innovations are exploring the windows of opportunities opened by technical changes, and as such are influencing research and policy.

3.5 African Regional ICTs The cadre of researchers have explored the regional connectivity, and found a voice to argue their case for better connectivity. In particular:-

- Academia has been developing plans that will enhance regional connectivity
- Activities on the GSM network have facilitated peering of GSM networks
- Wireless capacity building workshops brought together players from different countries that will work together towards regional actions as and when appropriate.

3.5.1. The higher educational institutes of a number of countries have addressed their connectivity issues. This has not only enhanced their own understanding of connectivity and its place in research and education, but they have been able to get involved with and take advantage of a significant policy “window of opportunity”. Policy has been affected within universities, within national educational policy and within regional ICT infrastructure. For example, the involvement of UbuntuNet Alliance was key in the fibre optic discussions and whether bandwidth should be based on the Open Access principles.

3.6 Research and Development (R&D) in African ICTs Connectivity Africa has been able to involve research institutions in a number of key activities that could have longer term impact, while at the same time building research capabilities. For instance,

- MICTI has contributed to Government plans for ICT business
- AVOIR has led to a growth in software development in universities
- AVOIR has contributed to e-learning within academia
- ART has demonstrated efficiencies that could be applied throughout the continent.

3.6.1 Universities have explored working with the private sector, in the context of the development of the country. This theme of R&D in African ICTs has also contributed to policy development. For instance, MRC is discussing with Provincial Health authorities about the handling of management information systems, and is moving towards a harmonisation across South Africa. MICTI has been able to broaden the horizon of the Ministry of Science and Technology regarding its Science Park development and longer term plans for strengthening the Mozambique economy. These actions found a window of opportunity i.e. the government considering Science Park models, and was able to bring together a community of change i.e. former Board members of the MICTI incubator development who were able to influence the government.

3.7 **Partnerships and networks** This theme focused on the need for partnerships and networks. In terms of policy influence it was looking for communities of change, and has succeeded. In particular:-

- Academic alliances have demonstrated the value of collective bargaining
- Partnerships have shown how Open Source software can be developed into viable packages (e.g., OpenMRS and EKewl)
- Judicial openness demonstrates the role of technology in creating a partnership base for a mainstream sector in a country and in a region.
- Donor co-operation has led to synergies and gains (eg Catia, CA and UNECA)

3.7.1. The community of change created by the alliance of Catia, CA and Acacia stakeholders should not be underestimated. While Catia was focused more on planned policy influence, it often drew on the same people as CA (people who had had their capacities enhanced by CA projects) and on the results of the CA program,

3.8 When we consider the case studies, it is clear that research has been a strong thread running through all projects. Innovation has been carried out in the context of study. FMFI which initially seemed to be a technical innovation project used outcome mapping to get engineers to consider the social impact of their work. Social analysis became a part of the project, and led to a more holistic analysis. It considered the potential replicability and scalability of the innovations.

3.9 Many of the supporting activities for the cases have been in the realm of monitoring or evaluation, or applied research. The research methodologies of Acacia have been used within CA i.e. the value of action research, networks and the approach to network meetings, activities for action implementation and research, and then networking again to share and diffuse the outcomes. This is the use of a research methodology not just to analyse but to enhance the proposition. The result is that there has been valuable lesson learning and a synergy between Acacia (which is clearly a social applied research PI), and consequently CA has been enhanced.

3.10 The Acacia review recommended a review of the web strategy, and a mirroring of research results on the IDRC site. While reviews have been conducted and some action taken, the experience of Connectivity Africa suggests that further intentional dissemination of research outputs on the web would be worthwhile. We acknowledge that policy makers in Africa are not yet in the habit of using the web to find new ideas and materials, and that there is still a strong role for paper. The review notes that there are publications in the pipeline and would encourage the team to “follow through” with a wide range of outputs that can address different stakeholder

groupings. Policy makers are not a homogeneous group, and different products are required to enhance different approaches.

3.11 Risk management was appropriate. At the start of Connectivity Africa, there was discussion regarding setting up an African “Institute”. This concept was challenged as potentially leading to an institution that would require basic funding after the program end, and would struggle to reach sustainability as donors tend to resist funding basic institutional costs. The direction the program took, which was to incorporate the management of the program into the Acacia team, was very appropriate. It led to a cost effective approach to managing the program and sustainability has been enshrined in the networks of African researchers and in building capacity of existing institutions, thus avoiding the risk of creating a new institute with all the challenges associated with such an action.

3.12 The risks of sustainability have also been mitigated by the integration with Acacia. By being part of a longer term research program, apparent one off projects have been able to be drawn into longer term program, for instance the JuriBurkina program has now been integrated into the RIJA program (funded by Acacia).

3.13 The program as a whole has evolved over the period of implementation. Partners were assessed and risk mitigated through the normal approval procedures. The flexibility of the program and its call to innovation did invite it into a risky space. Technological innovation can often fall down through institutional and contextual capacities, and that has been true for some of the projects. With hindsight a wider assessment of social economic context might have increased the mitigation of some of the risk. Nevertheless the professionalism of the program staff and their team approach and use of procedures was more than appropriate, and weaknesses have been used as opportunities for lesson learning.

3.14 So were the themes appropriate, did they lead to program influence, and do the headlines of outcomes given above add up to overall program value? Our judgement is that it does add up to value. In any innovative venture, there is relatively high risk. The market may not be developed, the concepts or ideas may seem “far fetched” to the status quo, the technology may stumble or by their very nature, pioneering personalities may be difficult to work with and may not stick around to see an idea through. Since Connectivity Africa was commissioned to be innovative, in terms of process it potentially faced some or all of the above. Its navigation through this difficult space without landing on the rocks is a credit to the team.

3.15 Overall the program presents good value for money. In comparison with similar programs such as Catia and Acacia, the program stands with an equivalent value.

4. Issues for consideration

4.1 If a Connectivity Africa II is envisaged it should retain its emphasis on building capacity, retain the strategy of networks and partnership and continue to push for regional connectivity. While it should keep a view on innovative technology, it should widen the view to include convergence with traditional media, applications and the role of ICTs in efficient and effective delivery of development interventions.

4.2 The link between Acacia and CA, managed by the same team, has added value, and is to be recommended should a future CA program be funded. It would be good to continue close co-operation with other donors as and when appropriate and an annual shared workshop with other donors would be appropriate. An advisory group meeting on a 6 monthly basis would not be advised. Close cooperation with UNECA needs to be focused around specific activities which UNECA can take the lead on.

4.3 Many of the innovative technologies are only just reaching a point where lesson learning can be consolidated and replicated, and even scaled. The CA program was a short time span for such innovation to be tried, tested, freed from technical bugs, and disseminated. If Acacia picks up elements of the CA program then dissemination will occur, but it would be beneficial to have funding for the next few years to take the lesson learning forward.

Acronyms

ART	Anti-Retroviral Treatment
CA	Connectivity Africa
Catia	Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa
CfSK	Computers for Schools Kenya
DFID	UK Department for International Development
FMFI	First Mile, First Inch
FRAO	Fondation Rurale pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
MHIN	Mozambique Health Information Network
MRC	South African Medical Research Council
MICTI	Mozambique ICT Institute
PICTA	Partnership for ICTs in Africa
PDAs	Personal Digital Assistants
RIJA	African Legal Information Network
UHIN	Uganda Health Information Network
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WiMax	Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access

This is an executive summary of the report, “Connectivity Africa External Review Report” by Simon Batchelor and Moctar Sow, May 12, 2007. The full report is available from IDRC’s Evaluation Unit.

Annex 6: Senior Management response

The Senior Management Committee has reviewed the Annual Corporate Evaluation Report (ACE) 2008. The report serves to remind us of the importance of the Centre maintaining an evaluation system that includes elements of independence and covers a wide range of IDRC's activities. In its introduction, it provides Board members with a useful overview of the Centre's evaluation activity at the project, program and corporate level, and how the results of evaluation are used for learning and accountability.

In terms of specific evaluation activity, the Report notes (in Section 2) the quality of the fourteen evaluation reports received in 2007-08 and provides a comparison with previous years. We note that the ratings both overall and in terms of key criteria (utility, feasibility, accuracy and propriety) show a marked increase over previous years. For the criterion of propriety, this increase is explained by a change of definition. For the other criteria, this appears to show that the quality of evaluation reports has improved. We think that it is difficult to arrive at any conclusion on the basis of one year, and will therefore be interested to monitor the ratings over the next few years to see whether there is a long-term improvement in quality or whether this is a one-off result.

We note the considerable progress that has been made on the Strategic Evaluation of capacity development. In 2006-07, the Evaluation Unit developed a typology to assess achievements in capacity building, and elaborated a list of "good practices". This year's Report presents summaries of five case studies that hint at the richness of the full-text reports. These show promise for the learning that should result from the cross-case analysis that is proposed on issues related to organizational development, such as (i) the role of collegial relationships between IDRC staff and project partners; (ii) the implicit versus explicit objectives in terms of developing organization capacity; (iii) the differing understanding and interpretations of capacity development and the language Centre staff use to describe it, and (iv) finding the balance between goals of research capacity development and research for policy influence. We look forward to the synthesis and conclusions of the Strategic Evaluation that should contribute to improving what we are doing, and provide a basis for reflection on future activities.

Overall, we endorse the report, and look forward to receiving Governors' views on it.